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## PAUL IN ROME<sup>†</sup>

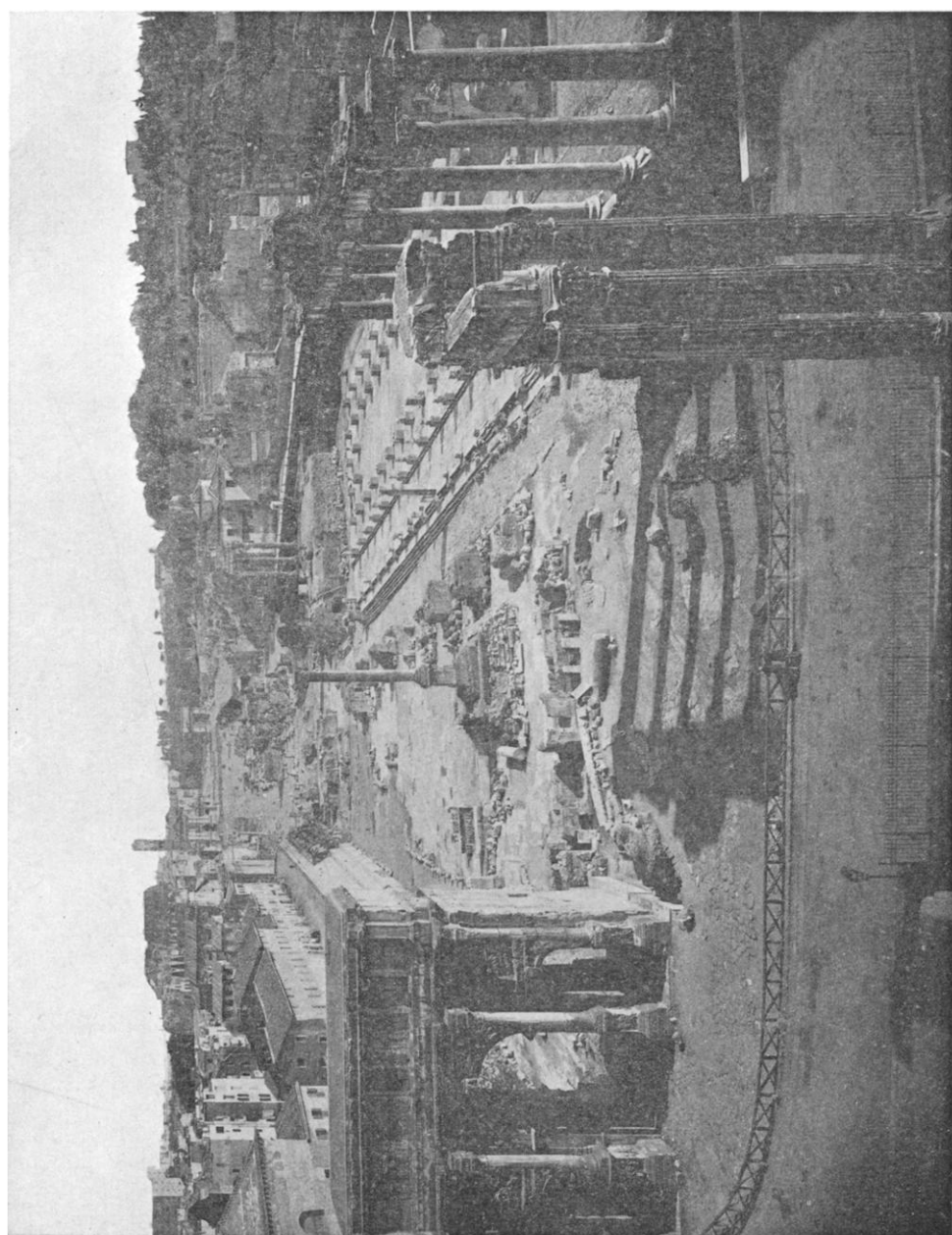
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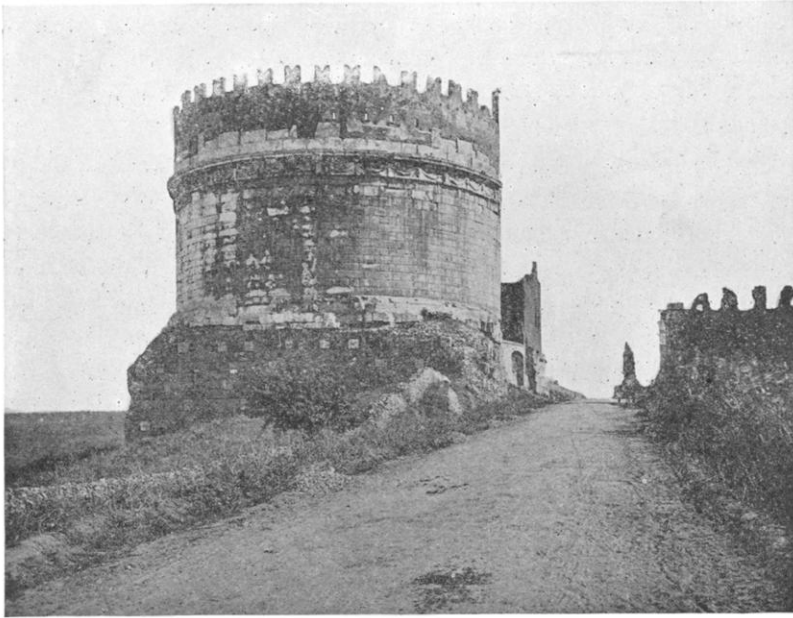
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Here the preliminary question—one affecting our view of the so-called Pastoral Epistles in particular—is this: what was the issue of Paul's appeal to Caesar? To the present writer it is practically certain that it was Paul's death, as a disturber of public order—a crime to which the imperial system was apt to be very pitiless, unless it had some special reason to the contrary. Now the special conditions of Paul's case were all against him. He reached Rome when Nero's first five "golden years" of rule under the guidance of Seneca and Burrus were over, and when he had already passed under the sway of his paramour Poppaea, who had strong Jewish leanings, which in turn influenced Nero's action in more than one instance told us by Josephus. But we are not left to such probabilities in estimating Paul's fate. The writer of Acts himself gives us to understand as plainly as he could, short of explicit statement—which was needless for his first readers—that when Paul set his face to go to Jerusalem, in spite of various warnings as to his danger, it was the beginning of the end of his career. He makes us feel that his hero was never so great as when he persisted in going up nevertheless, in order to assure unity in the church of Christ by a final token of gentile brotherliness toward the "poor saints" of the mother church in Judea, and when he continued to show his sublime trust in God through all the vicissitudes of the voyage to Rome. He shows us, too, in the closing verses of his narrative, how the wrath of man was overruled to the fulfilment of Paul's ambition to preach the gospel in Rome. *Paulus Romae, apex evangelii*. All this is true: but that the topstone of this summit of the gospel's triumph in Paul the apostle was his martyrdom at the hands of the tyrant Nero—this also is hinted by the author of Acts. Nor does he feel that thereby he is spoiling the moral of his story as a whole, which tells of the normal attitude of Roman law as habitually on the side of the Christians, in face of Jewish enmity.

<sup>†</sup> This study covers the International Sunday School Lessons for November, 1909.



For Nero was not normal, as everyone recognized at the time when the Book of Acts was written. Moreover its author had already provided the antidote to any erroneous inference from the fact that Paul was known to have been executed by Nero's order, by describing at such length the repeated hearings before Roman tribunals which issued in the finding, "This man could have been set at liberty, had he not appealed to Caesar" (27:32). Finally, that Paul so suffered at the end of the "two years" beyond which Acts does not lift the



TOMB OF CECILIA METELLA, ON THE APPIAN WAY  
Paul passed this on his way to Rome

veil, and was not released so as to visit the East afresh (as is often inferred from the Pastoral Epistles)—let alone Spain—this is manifestly implied by the fact that Acts records Paul's presentiment to the contrary (20:25), underlined as it were by the author's own hand in the emphasis given to Paul's words by the comment added in 20:38.

Against such evidence in Acts itself nothing to the contrary effect can stand for a moment, not even that of I Clem., chap. 5. But in fact Clement himself, though he seems to imply<sup>2</sup> that Paul had

<sup>2</sup> Probably on account of Paul's purpose in Rom. 15:28, as with later writers.

reached Spain ("the bound of the West") ere he died his martyr's death, implies also that both Peter and Paul predeceased the "great multitude"<sup>3</sup> of the Neronian martyrs in the summer of 64 A. D. If by this Clement meant that Paul's death belonged to the first stage of the persecution of 64, he is manifestly contradicted by II Tim. 4:16, and in fact by the whole context of the passage. If, on the other hand, he simply places Paul's separate martyrdom prior to 64, then he leaves no room for a journey to Spain and another to the East (such as the Pastoral Epistles are held to imply), but in fact tends to support the view that Paul was never released from any Roman imprisonment save by death. In no case can the upholders of a date for Paul's death later than the early part of 64 claim Clement as on their side.

Assuming, then, that Paul's sojourn in Rome lasted from about February, 60, to at least late in 62, and possibly for some months longer,<sup>4</sup> we have now to try to picture to ourselves his experiences in this period, and that in the belief that the letters to Timothy and Titus came from his pen during this time. Our first task must be to attempt to arrange his Roman writings in something like their historical order.<sup>5</sup> The tests which we have to apply are the following: (1) Paul's forecast of the course and issue of his appeal to Caesar; (2) the progress of his work in Rome; (3) the movements of his companions referred to in more than one of the letters. We have to inquire what each letter implies on one or more of these points.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> "To the company of these true men, life's citizenship dutifully accomplished, was gathered together a great multitude of elect ones" (6:1, *τούτοις τοῖς ἀνδράσιν ὁσίως πολιτευσαμένοις συνηθροίσθη πολὺ πλῆθος ἐκλεκτῶν*).

<sup>4</sup> Acts 28:30 does not imply that the "two whole years" were necessarily closed at once by Paul's death, but only that during that period he remained "in his own hired lodgings . . . without restraint" upon the access to him of visitors for his message's sake. This may have been followed by a briefer period of close confinement, possibly after his first hearing.

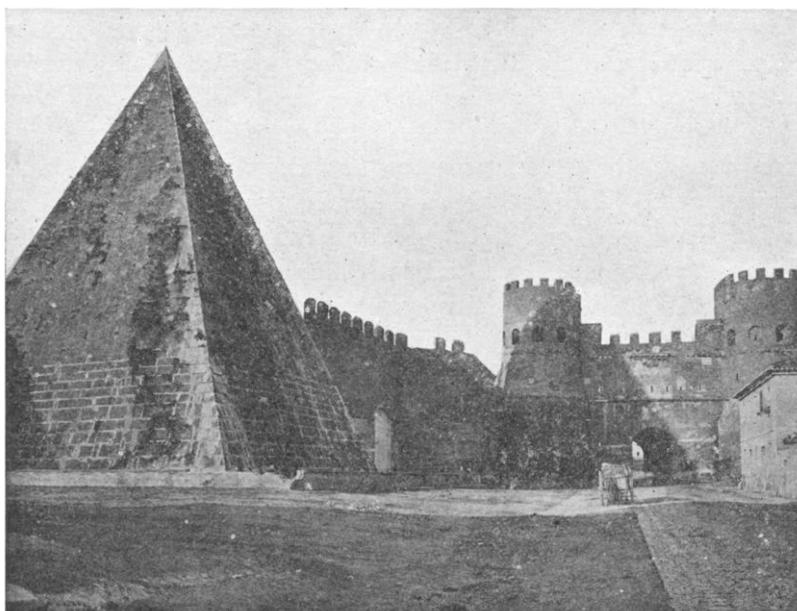
<sup>5</sup> Lightfoot places Philippians first of the "Captivity Group;" but most foreign scholars place it after Colossians, etc., and near the end of the two years.

<sup>6</sup> To these questions of style are secondary, because inconclusive. Thus the difference of style between Philippians and Colossians, on the one hand, and Paul's earlier groups of epistles, on the other, are so much greater than was a priori to be expected, that it was for long treated by many as disproving the genuineness of the former pair, which yet are now generally admitted on other grounds to be by Paul. Similarly a priori we should feel inclined on style and vocabulary alone to separate the dates of

As to (1), we have to remember that the hearings at Caesarea had created a presumption that there was no good case against Paul; and perhaps the official report carried by the centurion Julius to Caesar rather pointed that way. At least this is how Paul himself would view the situation when he entered Rome. Hence our first canon may run as follows: An epistle may be regarded as dating *early* in this period *in proportion as it confidently assumes* the prospect of *a speedy release*; and vice versa. That is, as time went on, and Paul learned to appraise more accurately the forces at work against him—whether the feeling in official legal circles at Rome touching breaches of law and order in the provinces, and as to Christianity as connected therewith, or the strength of the Jewish influences about Nero's person—his tone would first become more dubious and then change to one of settled assurance that his release would only be through death. In this light II Timothy represents the last stage before the end; and next to it would come Philippians, as representing doubt as to the human probabilities of the case (1:20, "whether by life or death") though on the score of totally different considerations, viz., those connected with the value of his life to his churches, he has a kind of assurance that that life will providentially be spared (1:24-26, cf. 2:24, note "in the Lord"). Most notable, however, are the words in 2:17, "Yea, if also I am in the act of being poured forth upon the sacrifice and service of your faith [like a closing libation], I rejoice and share in the joy with you all." For not only do they let us hear between the lines of what is designed and meant to be a letter in the major key, for his friends' sakes, a note of deeper mis-giving<sup>7</sup> than he cares to utter clearly; but the metaphor which he Philippians and Colossians respectively by a far greater interval than other considerations will allow. That is, in the last resort, the linguistic argument must be regarded as so limited in its application by the very different subject-matter of the letters in question, as to be almost useless. Particularly is this so with the Pastoral Epistles, since we have no letters to Paul's helpers, belonging to earlier periods, to place side by side with them for comparison. They are a type apart. The few years' interval, which those who assume dates between 65 and 68 can place between them and the other group, does not suffice to solve the linguistic problem by mere lapse of time.

<sup>7</sup> Compare the cautious "as soon as I can discern my prospects" (2:23). To the same effect is the note of weariness which seems to make itself heard in the words, "having the desire to depart and be with Christ—for it is very far better" (1:23). This, in contrast, e. g., to Col. 4:3 f.; 6:19 f. (see [2] below), sounds like the tone of the second rather than the first year of Paul's strenuous and much-tried life in Rome.

here employed conditionally is the same that recurs with categorical certainty in II Tim. 4:6: "For I, for my part, am already in the act of being poured forth, and the season of my departure is upon me." Surely this reveals a continuous current of thought at two points adjacent in time, and in no small degree forbids our placing any other of the captivity letters between those in which so striking a simile recurs in such a way. Next in regressive order we should place the utterance in Philemon, vs. 22, "But withal prepare also lodging



PYRAMID OF CAIUS CESTIUS  
Near which Paul suffered martyrdom

for me; for I hope that through your prayers I shall be graciously granted to you." Observe that it is only by the methods of the religious calculus, rather than those of human probability, that he reaches this hope (as in Phil. 1:24 ff.). Nor does he indulge in the expression even of such a hope in his more public letter to the church of which Philemon was a member (see Col. 4:9), or in his circular letter to certain Asian churches (our "Ephesians"), which were carried by the same messenger (cf. the closing greetings with those in Col.

4:10 ff.). There he makes only a guarded reference to his position, leaving Tychicus to explain by word of mouth what it would be unsafe to say in writing (Col. 4:7 f.; Eph. 6:21 f.). On the other hand, it is in I Timothy and Titus that the most confident and unqualified expectations of all as to his release find expression. "These things I write unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly; but if I tarry long . . . .;" "Till I come, give heed to reading. . . .". So we read in I Timothy (3:14 f.; 4:13); while in Titus (3:12) Paul informs his friend that he "has determined to winter" at Nicopolis in Epirus. From the fact that he adds, "Set forward Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently," we may gather that they were on their way to gather evidence on his behalf, possibly in Asia, where Apollos could direct the lawyer Zenas to the right persons. If this be a well-grounded suggestion, it would tend to support the idea that Apollos carried not only the letter to Titus but also I Timothy, written some days and weeks earlier (though quite in the same manner), to judge from the rather different programme of Paul's movements in 3:14 f., as compared with Titus 3:12. This would yield the order, I Timothy, Titus (spring or early summer, 60); Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians (written when Timothy had already joined Paul in Rome, late in 60 or early 61); Philippians (while Timothy was still with Paul, spring or early summer, 61); II Timothy (winter of 61 or early in 62), after the first hearing of Paul's case; second hearing, and death of Paul (about spring or early summer in 62).

As to (2), the references to the progress of Paul's work in Rome agree, so far as they go, with such an order. But it is only on the relative order of Colossians and Ephesians, on the one hand, and Philippians, on the other, that this test can be brought to bear. In the two former epistles we find the apostle asking for his churches' prayers "that God may open unto us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ . . . . that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak it" (Col. 4:3 f.; cf. Eph. 6:19 f., "that I may speak boldly"). In Philippians, however, we read how Paul's bold testimony in his hands has already borne much fruit, both directly and indirectly through the impulse given to others in Rome—some of them jealous and unfriendly toward Paul's distinctive gospel—to preach more boldly than heretofore (1:12-18). Similarly the bitterness of Paul's



disappointment with the degree to which Christians about him "all of them seek their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus" (2:21)—betraying him as it does into a form of statement more sweeping than his probable meaning, which had reference mainly to the restriction of the sympathies of the bulk of Roman Christians to their own local concerns—this, surely, points to a sad experience of considerable length touching the feature in question.<sup>8</sup>

Finally as to (3), the movements of his companions referred to in these letters seem to fit best into the order above suggested. Take first the case of Timothy. He is found with Paul in Colossians and Philippians, but is apparently at Ephesus in both I and II Timothy. The main question here is, whether he was away from Ephesus between the writing of these two epistles, or not. On the whole it seems most probable that I Timothy was written to keep Paul's lieutenant at his post of difficulty when anxious to hasten to his spiritual father's side on first hearing of his journey to Rome (possibly through Aristarchus; see Acts 27:2). This suits its opening words, which remind Timothy of a parallel occasion (1:3). For if the occasion in question be that of Paul's journey into Macedonia after the riot in Ephesus (Acts 20:1), as it is natural to suppose, then Paul would be more likely to refer to it on the first occasion of communicating with Timothy from Rome than a year or more later and after they had already met in Rome. Further, this view is borne out by the kindred epistle to Titus, which was probably written about the same time as I Timothy. If it be true that it was on the voyage to Rome itself that Titus had been left behind in Crete, to set in order church conditions—those of which Paul had only time to be made aware—without the opportunity of setting them in order personally, during the rather prolonged delay at Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea, due to bad weather (Acts 28:8 f.): if such be the situation implied by Titus 1:5, then it is probable that Titus would send a report and request for further advice as soon as the approach of spring opened up the sea-communication with Rome.

Now some words on the general impression to be gathered from

<sup>8</sup> So too the expression "now at length," in Paul's reference to the revived tokens of the Philippians' care for his comfort, points to a considerable length of time spent at Rome before the material help was sent.

these records of Paul's life and work in Rome during the last two years of his career—an impression which does not depend in its broad features upon any open questions as to the order of his letters. Perhaps the main impression is this: How keen were the human sensibilities of this man, yet how complete his spiritual superiority to their demands in case of need. This comes home to us particularly from a thoughtful perusal of his letter to the Philippians, perhaps the most perfect mirror of Paul's personal religion that we have. But each of the other writings contributes something to our sense of the divine life realizing itself through Paul's humanity, and raising it even above its normal limitations to levels of superhuman moral heroism and self-mastery. To begin with, he had to undergo, almost from the moment of his arrival, a series of disillusionments as to fellow-Christians, in connection with the attitude of the members of the Roman church to himself and his wider work. It had cheered his heart after the anxieties of his long journey to the Rome he so ardently desired to see, to be met far on the road by "brethren" from Rome, living witnesses of Christ's power in the capital of the world (Acts 28:15). But this first impression was destined to suffer sad shocks, as he found himself and his faithful circle of personal disciples, who came and went on various missions to his distant churches as time wore on, largely isolated amid Roman Christians. Apart altogether from those of Judaizing tendencies, these appear not to have realized what the gospel itself owed to this prisoner for its sake in their midst, and to have been taken up almost entirely with their own local interests, for the ignoring of the interests of the one Master throughout the world, which lay so close to Paul's heart (see Phil. 2:20 f.). Then came the care of his beloved churches themselves, whether those founded by himself in person or those founded or being assisted by his disciples and helpers, such as Epaphras of Colossae (Col. 1:7; 4:12). Indeed the extent of his secondary or indirect missionary influence is first brought home to us during his confinement in Rome (II Tim. 4:10 reveals its extension to Dalmatia; cf. Titus 3:12, Nicopolis). His soul carried on a constant contest with the powers of evil and error on behalf of these, often unknown, children in the faith (Col. 1:29—2:1). Further, we get most pleasing glimpses into his personal relationships; the enthusiasm of his regard and love for a loyal and

disinterested fellow-worker like Timothy (Phil. 2:20, 22), or for a self-forgetful Epaphroditus; the tact and the fine regard for another's feelings, coupled with gracious humor, visible in his letter to Philemon, the letter of the "perfect Christian gentleman;" the dignified gratitude, rejoicing in the givers more than in their gift, which breathes in Phil. 4:10 ff.; the bracing sympathy with which he handles Timothy's rather tender, clinging nature in the opening of his last letter to him (1:3 ff.). In all these we see that the human friend was not swallowed up in the apostle of Jesus Christ, but only glorified and raised to a higher power in a soul bound to others by the deepest of bonds, common devotion to a noble and divine cause, and set "at leisure from itself" to cheer and sympathize. How completely Paul was removed from the Stoic type of the "self-sufficient man"—the master of his own fate—while yet lifted by the power of Another above the level where the storm of circumstance can fret and annoy, is manifest in Phil. 4:10 ff.

Lastly, all must be struck by his calm heroism, as he faced death almost alone and in the face of seeming disaster to the cause he knew himself, as no other, to represent (see II Tim. 4:6-8, 17 f.). Verily Paul was the type of "the Victory that overcometh the world, even our faith"—the faith in God through Christ, his Lord and ours.